

Week 4 Standard Edition Workbook

January 19-25, 2026: The Machinery of Death

Your Name: _____ Date Started: _____

This Week's Materials

Daily Videos (Salem Witch Trials Daily YouTube Playlist)

- January 19: European Witch Trials
- January 20: European Witch Trials 2
- January 21: Witch Trials in England and New England
- January 22: North American Witch Trials
- January 23: Familiars
- January 24: Contemporary Accounts
- January 25: Governor Sir William Phips

Weekly Podcast (Supplemental) The Thing About Salem: "Who Wrote the First Book on the Salem Witch Trials?"

This podcast episode provides deeper context and is recommended but optional for completing the course.

How to Use This Workbook

- Watch each daily video (January 19-25)
- Use the transcript as a study resource (optional but helpful)
- Complete the activities below as you go
- Read the Weekly Blog for deeper synthesis
- Engage with the weekly challenges

DAILY TRANSCRIPT ACTIVITIES

January 19 - European Witch Trials

Fill-in-the-Blank Summary:

The witch trials that swept across Europe didn't appear out of nowhere. While individuals were put on trial for using magic to harm others prior to the 15th century, the mass witch-hunt characterized by hunting a supposed organized diabolical sect did not exist in Europe until specific theological ideas coalesced in the _____ in the 1430s and 1440s. The elaborated theory held that witches received power from the _____ with whom they made a pact. In 1486, Heinrich Kramer's _____ standardized these beliefs and spread them across Europe through the printing press. Roughly _____ people were tried for witchcraft across Europe over 350 years. Between _____ and _____ of these were executed.

Why this matters:

January 20 - European Witch Trials 2

Pause and Reflect:

After learning that witchcraft was classified as *crimen exceptum*, an exceptional crime, pause and answer:

Because witchcraft was seen as impossible to prove through normal evidence, courts suspended standard legal protections and used torture, searching for the devil's mark, swimming tests, and spectral evidence. How does classifying something as an "exceptional crime" create a justification for abandoning the very protections designed to prevent injustice?

Critical Timeline:

Formal witch trials declined in the late _____ and early _____ centuries.

The British Witchcraft Act of _____ decriminalized witchcraft, punishing instead those who fraudulently claimed to have magical powers.

What caused the decline? List three factors:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

January 21 - Witch Trials in England and New England

Pause and Reflect:

After learning about Matthew Hopkins and the method of watching and walking, pause and answer:

Hopkins kept suspects awake for days, forcing them to pace their cells while being continuously observed. The stated purpose was to watch for familiars. The actual result was sleep deprivation that induced hallucinations and extracted confessions. How is this "technically legal" torture different from continental torture methods, and how is it the same?

Three Colonial Precedents:

Alice Young was executed in Connecticut on _____, becoming the first execution for witchcraft in the American colonies.

Connecticut executed _____ people consecutively between 1647 and 1654, a 100% conviction rate.

In 1669, Connecticut established a precedent by ruling that _____ was insufficient for conviction without multiple witnesses to the same physical act.

January 22 - North American Witch Trials

Annotation Activity:

In your notes or transcript, mark each colony mentioned and note whether they executed anyone for witchcraft and why or why not.

List 5 colonies/regions and their witchcraft prosecution patterns:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

The Pattern:

What pattern do you notice about which colonies executed people and which didn't? What factors made a difference?

January 23 - Familiars

Pause and Reflect:

After the discussion of witch's marks and invasive physical examinations, pause and answer:

English legal writers created detailed guides for where to search bodies for the devil's mark, including "secretest parts." Robert Calef pointed out none of this was in the Bible. This was invented by men. What does it mean that supposed "evidence of witchcraft" was created by legal writers, not based on scripture or actual crime?

Evidence Invented:

List what authorities claimed about witch's marks or teats:

What happened during the examination of Rebecca Nurse, Bridget Bishop, and Elizabeth Proctor on June 2, 1692?

January 24 - Contemporary Accounts

Fill-in-the-Blank Summary:

Reverend Deodat Lawson published _____ in April 1692, the first book on the Salem Witch Trials. This document validated supernatural attacks as real physical events. Meanwhile, Reverend Samuel Willard wrote an underground dialogue between _____, representing Salem prosecution, and _____, a skeptical Boston voice. In October 1692, Thomas Brattle wrote a scathing letter exposing _____ and hypocrisy. Cotton Mather published _____ defending the trials. His father, Increase Mather, effectively ended the trials with _____, which

rejected spectral evidence and concluded it is better for _____ suspected witches to escape than for one innocent person to be condemned.

Why this matters:

January 25 - Governor Sir William Phips

Pause and Reflect:

After learning Phips didn't write to England about the witch panic until October 12, 1692, five months after arriving, pause and answer:

By October, 20 people had been executed. Phips had created the emergency court, approved Cotton Mather's defense of the trials, and arrested a minister for questioning the court's judgment. What does his five-month silence to England tell you about his priorities and his understanding of what was happening?

Timeline Tracker:

Phips arrived in Boston with the new charter on _____.

He created the Court of Oyer and Terminer on _____.

He arrested William Milborne for questioning the court on _____.

He finally shut down the Court of Oyer and Terminer on _____.

He overruled the final execution warrant on _____.

QUOTE SCAVENGER HUNT (All Seven Days)

Your Task: Find 3 examples of METHODS or PRECEDENTS that were imported from Europe or established in earlier colonial witch trials.

Example 1: Date: _____ Quote or description:

Example 2: Date: _____ Quote or description:

Example 3: Date: _____ Quote or description:

PODCAST EPISODE ACTIVITIES (Supplemental)

Listening Notes: "Who Wrote the First Book on the Salem Witch Trials?"

Key Questions:

What was Deodat Lawson's role in documenting the trials?

What did Samuel Willard's dialogue argue about proof and evidence?

What did Thomas Brattle expose in his October 1692 letter?

How did Increase Mather's *Cases of Conscience* differ from his son Cotton's approach?

What did Robert Calef accuse Cotton Mather of doing?

What was Thomas Maule's perspective as a Quaker critic?

Podcast Vocabulary

Define these terms from the episode:

Spectral evidence:

Touch test:

Dragooning methods:

Cases of Conscience:

Humane evidence:

Connection & Reflection

How does understanding the global and colonial history of witch trials (methodology imported from Europe, precedents set in Connecticut and Massachusetts, invasive examinations normalized) help you understand why Salem happened the way it did?

Think about: Templates created by books and pamphlets, legal frameworks already in place, methods already tested.

Quote from Podcast

Find one detail from the podcast that surprised you or gave you new perspective:

Why did this stand out to you?

VOCABULARY CHECK

Define these key terms in your own words after encountering them this week:

Cumulative Theory:

Crimen Exceptum:

Malleus Maleficarum:

Watching and Walking:

Witch Pricker:

Witch's Mark/Teat:

Familiar Spirits:

Court of Oyer and Terminer:

Superior Court of Judicature:

A Brief and True Narrative:

Cases of Conscience:

More Wonders of the Invisible World:

WEEKLY CHALLENGES

Challenge 1: Predict What Happens Next

Based on what you've learned about imported European methods, colonial precedents, invasive examinations as "evidence," an absent then emergency-minded governor, and the war of words beginning, predict what happens when arrests begin in late January and early February.

Consider: Who has the templates? What methods will be used? Who will believe what evidence?

Your prediction:

Challenge 2: Citation Exercise

Claim: "The Salem Witch Trials were enabled by 250 years of European witch-hunting methodology, colonial precedents, and invented forms of evidence that made conviction nearly guaranteed."

Your Task: Find supporting evidence in this week's transcripts. Cite the specific day (January 19-25) and quote or paraphrase the evidence.

Evidence 1: Date: _____ Evidence:

Evidence 2: Date: _____ Evidence:

Evidence 3: Date: _____ Evidence:

Challenge 3: Character Journal

You are a magistrate in Massachusetts in late January 1692.

You've read about Matthew Hopkins's methods. You know about the Connecticut precedents. You've read Cotton Mather's *Memorable Providences* about the Goodwin children. You believe in witchcraft. You know how to search for the devil's mark. You know spectral evidence has been used before. The jails are filling up. Governor Phips just created an emergency court.

Write 5-7 sentences from your perspective: What methods will you use? What evidence will you accept? How confident are you in your ability to identify witches? Are you worried about anything?

Challenge 4: Share Your Learning

Take what you've learned this week about European precedents, colonial witch trials before Salem, invented evidence, or the contemporary accounts and share it with your circle.

Check the method(s) you used: Explained Hopkins's methods or the Newcastle executions to someone Posted about Connecticut or Massachusetts precedents on social media Discussed the devil's mark as invented evidence with a group Created content about the war of words (Lawson, Brattle, Mathers, Calef) Connected historical methodology to modern evidentiary standards

What did you share? How did people respond?

DISCUSSION REFLECTION

After reading this week's blog, respond to the discussion question:

How do imported methodologies, established precedents, and invented forms of evidence create a system where conviction becomes nearly inevitable? What modern parallels can you identify where "exceptional" circumstances justify abandoning normal protections?

Think about: Templates for how to identify and prosecute, legal frameworks already tested, professional witch-finders profiting, emergency courts created under pressure.

Your thoughts:

PROGRESS TRACKER

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<div style="margin: 20px 0;"> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; border-radius: 10px; height: 30px; width: 100%; position: relative; overflow: hidden;"> <div style="background: linear-gradient(90deg, #8b4513 0%, #d2691e 100%); height: 100%; width: 5.3%; transition: width 0.3s ease;"></div> </div> <p style="margin-top: 8px; font-size: 14px; color: #666;">Week 4 of ~75 weeks | ~5% Complete | January 2026 - May 2027</p> </div>
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Timeline Milestone: January 19-25, 1692. The imported methodology is in place, precedents are set, invasive examinations are normalized, and the governor has assembled an emergency court. The machinery of death is ready.

Coming Next Week: Late January when afflictions spread beyond Betty and Abigail and the first accusations are made.

BADGE TRACKER

Mark the badges you've earned this week: #SalemDailyStudent (started the course) #SalemWeek4 (completed Week 4) #SalemDescendantPathStudent (if you have ancestral connections - use alongside other badges)

Did you post using your badges? Where?

Great work this week! You're doing the work of a researcher. See you next week!

Remember to use: #SalemDailyStudent #SalemWeek4 #ThingAboutSalem
#SalemDailyYoutube #SalemDescendantPath
